

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 10, 2009

TO: Ivy Edmonds-Hess
Parsons Brinckerhoff

FROM: Steve Granholm, Bird Monitoring Task Leader
LSA Associates, Inc.

FOR: California Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: Bird Monitoring Memo #346, Week of February 16 - 20, 2009
Bay Bridge East Span Project

PURSUANT TO: US Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinion and California Department of Fish and Game Incidental Take Permit

Introduction

In order to improve the seismic safety of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge (SFOBB), the State of California, Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is replacing the existing SFOBB East Span with a new bridge immediately to the north. This is a multi-year effort that will involve a number of construction activities on land as well as in San Francisco Bay. Some of these activities could potentially affect federally and State endangered or threatened bird species and other bird species of special concern.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Biological Opinion (page 22) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) Incidental Take Permit (Fully Protected Species Items 1 and 2 on pages 4 and 5) require monitoring of the California least tern and California brown pelican. The CDFG is also concerned about potential impacts to the American peregrine falcon and the double-crested cormorant and requires a management plan for these species (Fully Protected Species Item 3 on page 5). In addition, the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge East Span Seismic Safety Project Final Environmental Impact Statement/Statutory Exemption and Final Section 4(f) Evaluation (FEIS) (page 4-130) requires that Caltrans monitor the double-crested cormorant colony and American peregrine falcon during the breeding season and prevent the birds from nesting on the existing bridge where potential impacts by construction activities could occur.

As required by the USFWS Biological Opinion and CDFG Incidental Take Permit, the monitoring efforts are focused primarily on three endangered species: the California least tern, California brown pelican, and American peregrine falcon. The primary objectives are to minimize impacts to these three species and document any take of these species resulting from construction activities. In addition, monitoring is conducted to assess potential impacts to the breeding efforts of American peregrine falcons and double-crested cormorants on the existing SFOBB East Span. The monitoring also assesses potential impacts on breeding activities of western gulls, which are now known to nest on the existing bridge and new Pier E10E. Monitoring was conducted in accordance with the *Revised*

Final Bird Monitoring and Management Plan (Caltrans 2003). This plan incorporated the requirements of the USFWS, the CDFG, and the FEIS, as well as those of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) permit, Special Condition F-6.

This memo summarizes the SFOBB East Span's construction bird monitoring activities conducted by LSA Associates, Inc. (LSA) and Garcia and Associates (GANDA) during the week of February 16 - 20, 2009.

Bird Monitoring Activities

LSA and GANDA conducted monitoring of the active construction areas from GANDA's boat, and GANDA conducted peregrine falcon nest monitoring from the eastern shoreline of Yerba Buena Island. Construction activities during the bird survey included workers conducting various activities at the Oakland Touchdown Westbound, South-South Detour, and Self-Anchored Suspension construction sites, and boat, tug, and barge traffic on the bay. Construction activities during the peregrine survey included work on Pier T1 and for the South-South Detour. The work at Pier T1 included realignment of a barge carrying a large girder structure, with the cranes and barges located just below a perched female peregrine before and after copulation on Pier E2 of the existing bridge.

The bird survey was conducted from 0920 to 1220 hours on February 20, 2009. Peregrine falcon monitoring was conducted from 1045 to 1230 on February 18, 2009.

Results

Monitoring of Active Construction Areas

California Least Tern: No least terns were observed.

California Brown Pelican: Three brown pelicans were observed. At 0923 hours, one was flying over the bay towards Emeryville, approximately 400 meters (1,312 feet) north of the Oakland Touchdown. At 0925 another one was seen flying north in the same area. At 1158 hours, one was flying east to west, approximately 100 meters (328 feet) south of the existing bridge, and was last seen heading towards the U.S. Coast Guard station.

Peregrine Falcon: At 0927 hours, one peregrine falcon was seen flying to the top of the superstructure above existing Pier E3. This bird was not seen when the area was rechecked at 1145 to 1155 hours.

Double-crested Cormorant: Approximately five double-crested cormorants were seen in the study area. None were seen under the existing bridge in the area of the nesting colony.

Western Gull: Twenty-five to 30 western gulls were observed in the study area. Most were resting on the existing bridge.

Observations of Additional Bird Species: The other species observed during the bird survey (and the approximate number of individuals) were Canada goose (8), American wigeon (6), Eurasian wigeon (1), scaup species (140), surf scoter (54), bufflehead (105), ruddy duck (9), red-throated loon (1), common loon (3), horned grebe (12), eared grebe (7), western grebe (19), Clark's grebe (40), Brandt's cormorant (3), pelagic cormorant (1), great blue heron (1), mew gull (170), and California

gull (5). Ten black-crowned night-herons were seen in the cypress tree just north of the study area, on Treasure Island just north of Clipper Cove.

American Peregrine Falcon Nest Monitoring

At 1045 hours, a female was observed flying by Pier T1 of the new bridge and perching on the hand rail of the lowest ladder landing on the north side of existing Pier E3. The female then flew to existing Pier E5 and perched in the west-facing rectangular cove three down from the bridge deck. After a brief rest, she flew on to existing Pier E6 and perched on the south-facing cove two down from the bridge deck. Less than one minute later, she flew west and perched on existing Pier E2. At this time the male was observed perched on the crossbeam just below the bridge deck on existing Pier E5. The male then flew off and flew north out of view. The female gave several short calls, a minute before the pair was observed copulating on the north side of existing Pier E2, on a small I-beam above the lowest platform of the ladder on the existing bridge. After copulation, the male flew off to existing Pier E5 and was followed shortly thereafter by the female. The location of the female was unknown at the end of the survey.

Other Species Observed: The other species observed during the peregrine monitoring were western grebe, double-crested cormorant, and western gull. The number of other bird species observed during the peregrine falcon monitoring is not recorded because this activity would distract the monitor from watching for peregrine falcons.

Conclusions

The monitors did not observe any indications that birds were disturbed due to SFOBB East Span construction activities.

cc: Monica Gan, Caltrans